

Thornfield R-I Elementary

Perched on a hill above Thornfield, Missouri, the Thornfield R-I School continues to stand as a landmark of tradition and pride. The school is a testament to a unique K-8 student body, a dedicated and adaptable staff, and an extremely supportive rural community. Thornfield R-I has stood the test of time and continues to fulfill its mission of providing students with the skills they will need to become independent, responsible, and productive citizens.

The Thornfield R-I School was built through the WPA Program in 1937. The original building was constructed from native rock gathered from the Ozark hills surrounding the school. Many things have changed since the first high school senior class graduated in 1939. After WWII, the school began to serve only K-8 students. A gymnasium was added to serve the school and community in 1957, and additional classrooms were built in 1987. Renovation and modernization continued when a bond issue passed in 1997 with community support. The bond allowed the school to build a new gym and turn the old gym into classrooms, a library, and a modern computer lab.

Though the original building is very old, visitors have a hard time distinguishing between the old and new parts of the facility. This maintenance and upkeep says a lot about the care taken by students, staff, and community in regards to respecting the school's building and equipment.

Facility improvements have continued over the years with help from a community who views the school as an essential part of life in Thornfield. Recent additions to the school include a baseball field, pavilion, and outdoor basketball/tennis courts. Several community members dedicated their time and equipment to making these improvements possible in conjunction with a grant from the Department of Natural Resources. The community shows up to support the students while they participate in sporting, academic, and extra-curricular activities. Surrounded by a supportive community the school continues to flourish and meet the needs of all students.

Meeting the needs of students is always paramount in the minds and hearts of the loyal and dedicated staff at Thornfield R-I. Relying on innovation and adaptability rather than fancy new materials, the faculty maintains a high quality curriculum. The successful techniques used by the teachers at Thornfield R-I are evident when performance numbers are reviewed. In 2001, student performance became the number one priority as Thornfield received an APR score of 18. Pulling together, the staff students, and community rose to the occasion and increased APR to 36 in 2002, 45 in 2003, and a perfect 54 in 2004, 2005, and 2006. The unique feature of small class size allows the teachers to work one-on-one with students. Every teacher knows the name of every student in the district. There are no strangers in the Thornfield R-I building; from the administration to the support and maintenance staff, all are valued for their hard work and dedication to the education of the student body.

The student body is known around the area for good behavior and performance at both academic and sporting events. Thornfield kids are known to be respectful and well behaved while at other schools as a group. A higher than average ratio of students at Thornfield thinks academic success is important and this shows when they attend math and spelling bees, as well as quiz bowl competitions. The school chess club participates in several regional tournaments and won first place at four they attended in 2006-2007. Of course, many students are interested in sports and exhibit a high level of sportsmanship; while competing in basketball, volleyball, track and softball.

Currently fourth generation students are attending the same school their great-grandparents attended. The long legacy of quality education at Thornfield R-I has helped to produce state and local government officials, army colonels, teachers, nurses, farmers, and business people. Former students of Thornfield R-I remember their time here with fondness; they learned that not every school is as unique as Thornfield School. Not all schools carry such a long history of adapting to the changing face of society and education without losing sight of what is most important: its students and the lives they will lead when they walk out of the doors of Thornfield R-I School in Thornfield, Missouri.